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DECORATION & FURNITURE

HINTS FOR COUNTRY "BOXES."



EACH succeeding year appears to prolong the summer season. People who formerly thought themselves happy to spend four weeks of the dog-days out of town now scarcely content themselves with a three months' sojourn. An absence from home so prolonged requires preparations for personal comfort which have long since outgrown the dimensions of a Saratoga trunk. Not to consider the fussy people who take their own bed linen, hair pillows, and pet chairs, there are still many who cannot make themselves at home without some of the surroundings to which they are accustomed, and who carry with their summer outfits engravings, etchings, and whatever bric-à-brac is easily portable. The bare white walls of the average summer hotel are, in fact, as cheerless spaces as can be well conceived, and the trouble of rendering them more endurable by means of familiar objects is well repaid.

There is also a growing custom among families who find hotel accommodations too contracted or too expensive for their lengthened stay, to take instead one of the little "boxes" that are hastily put up on the seashore or among the mountains in the neighborhood of some frequented resort, where they can dispose themselves in several apartments and enjoy their privacy and freedom at will. This sort of living, which holds as it were solitude and society in either hand, has proven so attractive

first warm days. These are roughly constructed of pine boards, barely guarded against the actual coming of the wind and rain. Nevertheless they are roomy, airy, and really have all that is essential for personal comfort and convenience. But it is impossible in these

summer sojourn, whether shut up in a hotel room or enjoying the freedom and space of a seaside "box."

Let us suppose the latter in its most barren state, just as left by the carpenter and unvisited by the plasterer, who, indeed, is not expected. The floors may be first treated to a coat of paint and oiled according to some of the many receipts which now find a place in every almanac. The woodwork of the interior should be left alone until some definite result is reached with reference to the decoration of the various rooms. If painted, however, it may be remarked that when the house stands on a blinding strip of beach some cool tint of gray-green, gray-blue, or pale yellow-pink is admirable, leaving to the cities the sombre browns and dark reds. Within all should be cool and cheerful. The walls, which present simply the studding and the outer frame covering, may be first covered with stout brown paper. Two sorts of wall hanging are now presented for consideration, paper and stuffs, either or both of which may be appropriately used. It is the most convenient to divide the wall space into frieze, field, and dado, inasmuch as it is rather a part of the furnishing than serving as a background for furniture. Moreover, as we are considering work done by the inmates and casual servants instead of by professional decorators, the work, thus divided, is much more readily accomplished, requiring but little more than a stout step-ladder and hammer and nails. The Japanese papers used as friezes only need to be stretched and nailed lengthwise around the room. Mr. Symington's studio gives a valuable hint which may be advantageously used in this direction. The frieze in his case



DECORATIVE MEDALLION.

FROM THE "TAZZA FARNESE" IN THE NAPLES MUSEUM.

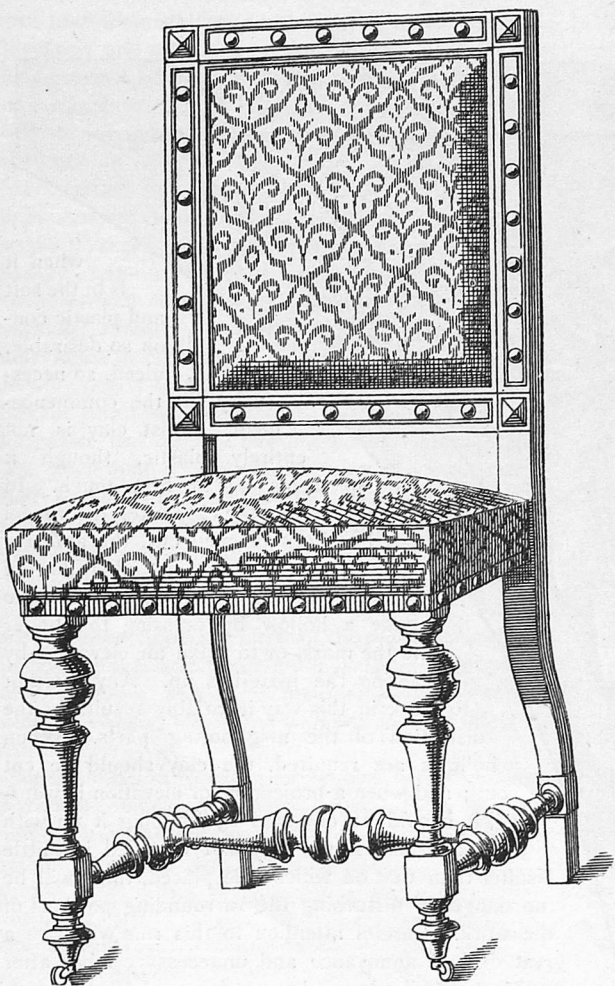
decorative days to be content with mere creature comforts. However, instead of stripping the town house to make pleasantly habitable the country "box," or even the hotel apartment casually occupied, it is much better to undertake some unique form of decoration which, if it have no other merit, shall at least differ from the surroundings which are familiar for nine months of the year.

There are two conditions requisite: first, that the decoration shall be movable, and, second, that it shall be cheap. Even if people own their quarters, such "boxes" as are here referred to are not sufficiently well built to insure the proper protection of that which is left for the longer and more destructive part of the year, especially as it is rarely the case that any one is put in charge of cottages of so little value. But it is an easy matter to furnish such a house simply and prettily, making the decorations such that they can be folded away when the autumn comes, and easily transported back to town to serve again a second season, or be adapted to different uses. For this purpose the Japanese stores offer the greatest variety of suggestions to those who have no special artistic training. Japanese furnishing includes something more than bespattering walls with fans and parasols, singly and in groups, and hanging up gay paper panels. The real treasures of the Japanese stores have scarcely been touched. The Water Color Society last winter unearthed some cheap draperies costing six cents a yard, which played no small part in the pleasing transformation of its exhibition interior.

Its gilded frieze was only paper, but of

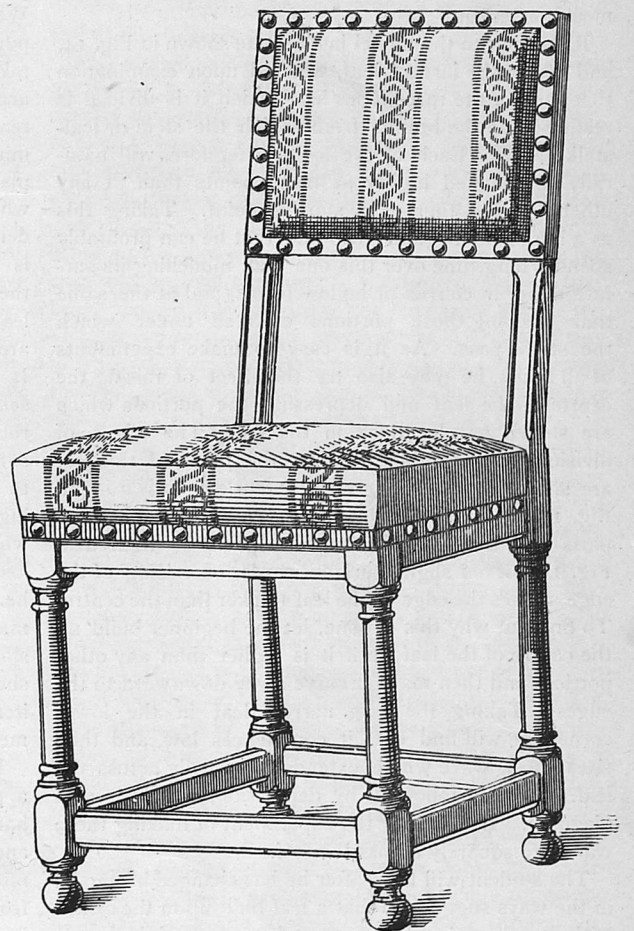
such quaint and interesting design that few who saw it could forget the share it bore in the general effect. This sort of decoration is easily possible during the

is a length of red cloth over which is stretched a light strip of cane of the same width, such as is used in the seating of chairs, with perhaps larger holes. The



DINING-ROOM CHAIR OF POOR DESIGN.

MADE BY FERD. VOGTS & CO., BERLIN.



DINING-ROOM CHAIR OF GOOD DESIGN.

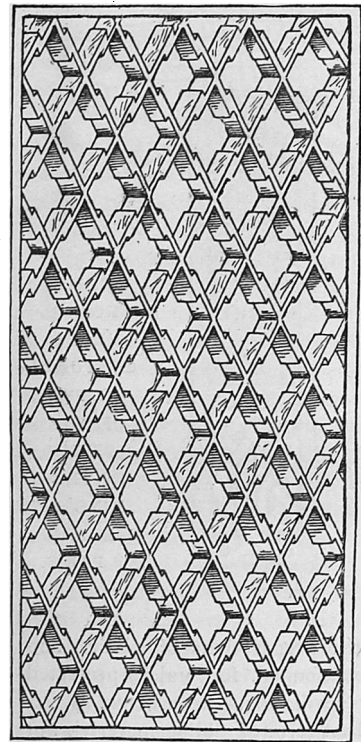
MADE BY FERD. VOGTS & CO., BERLIN.

that many people of moderate means, who do not aspire to a country place, have purchased or built "boxes" of their own to which they betake themselves with the

effect here is novel and exceedingly pretty, and such a frieze, it will be seen, is readily adjusted, and as readily taken down, and folded away for other occasions.

The studios of Mr. Blum and Mr. Lungren offer another suggestion which might be adopted where the occupants of the box have any skill in painting. This is a frieze of white cotton cloth, or satin sheeting, decorated in Japanese fashion. The effect is of grays, but

these are mingled with color in such a way as to modify the tone without the color really appearing. The design seems to depend on whatever Japanese fancy the mind chooses to accept at the moment, but all is perfectly balanced. There is no evidence of detail, but the work is done in a broad, easy manner. It seems somewhat presumptuous to put before the amateur a work done, however indifferently, by two such artists. But amateurs



JAPANESE LATTICE-SCREEN.

who care for such work will find in it a capital opportunity for study and for experiment. Moreover, the tedium which will stalk in the midst of leisure might be forestalled by putting up the frieze and making its decoration part of the summer's occupation.

The field may be gray-green Japanese paper in this case, or a stuff. Cheap Japanese draperies, sewed in required lengths and neatly stretched and fastened up, serve this purpose exceedingly well. Or, turning from Japanese fabrics, if any one does not hesitate at the extra expense, the light sprigged cretonne patterns are equally suitable. Looking at the decoration, as in the case of the frieze, as part of the summer's amusement and employment, the brown paper covering the studding offers the best of opportunities for different designs put on boldly in flat colors. These, if done in panels and fastened to narrow strips of moulding, can be afterward taken down and reserved for other purposes. For a dado nothing is more suitable than matting, which among other advantages will not be injured by the furniture; it should be nailed lengthwise around the room. Coarse canvas also makes an excellent dado, and this should also be mentioned for the field as a background for painting. Matting, it should be observed, is valuable in many ways—for floors, as screens, as window-hangings in place of shutters, and as outer portières. This is, in fact, its habitual use in the tropics, where it shuts out the blinding light and yet freely admits the air. The decorations for matting may consist of tall hollyhocks, sunflowers, grapes and their leaves, cacti, and branches of fruit, which should be executed with boldness and precision.

The subject of other decoration is almost too wide to enter upon here. If fans are used—and these can scarcely be left out—a series of graded bamboo paper fans (not folding ones) may be arranged in a cluster, the largest just above the dado, ascending in a curve something like a palm, and decreasing toward the ceiling until almost lost in a fan of the smallest size. Door panels are a fruitful field for decoration. The simplest method is by gluing on Japanese papers cut to fit the panel. For this purpose choose the small oblong papers, costing possibly three cents apiece, getting enough of each for a single panel. If one feels like undertaking more work the panels can be sketched in by hand. If the room is a Japanese room (and it is always desirable that some particular character be

given to each room), sprays of cherry blossoms and hawthorn, so common in Japanese decoration, are excellent subjects for copying.

In conclusion, a few suggestions may be made for the exterior. One is, to give the wall under shelter of the veranda a flat coat of paint and use it as a background for some sort of picture or decoration. The charming studio of Daniel French, the sculptor, at Concord, Mass., has a veranda overlooking an old orchard. The wall has been given a coat of plaster, which is stained a dark gray-green, and here some friendly hand has painted a corner of field flowers and grasses from which a flight of birds has started. If the house confronts a blazing strip of sand, the flowers which cannot grow elsewhere may be transferred to low boxes of loam and bound the porches with their beauty and fragrance. Finally, to add to the picturesque quality of the "box" in the landscape, and to the comfort of its occupants, gayly striped "persiennes" for sheltering windows and porches should not be forgotten.

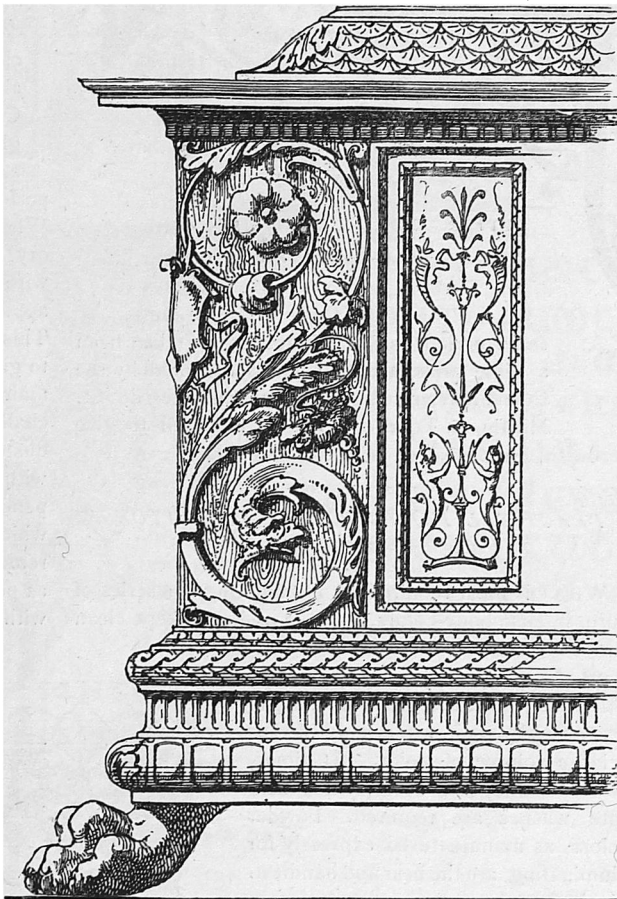
MARY GAY HUMPHREYS.

SOME SUGGESTIVE ILLUSTRATIONS.

THE illustrations on this and the page opposite, we believe, may all be found of more or less practical value to the decorator. The head of Medusa, in the original "tazza," is wondrously carved out of hard stone; but the design may be used for many materials. It affords an excellent lesson to the student in composition, and offers great decorative possibilities.

For summer use it would be difficult to find a better kind of short window blind than the Japanese screens illustrated herewith. Three or four of them, of different patterns, arranged together, produce an excellent effect. They are not pierced wood, but true joiners' work, beautifully finished. C. H. George has imported them in great variety. Bronzed or painted they may be used for ceilings with good effect.

The cabinet maker will find valuable suggestions in the sixteenth century carved chest, a portion of which is shown on this page, and the wood-carver will also find it interesting. To the general reader it would be



PART OF A CARVED WOODEN CHEST.

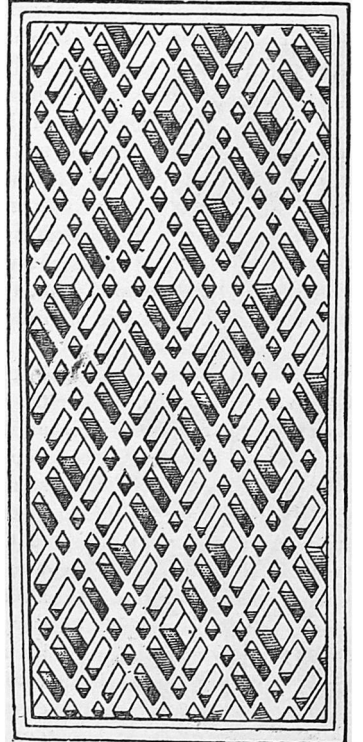
ABOUT 1500. IN THE BARGELLO, FLORENCE.

difficult to present a more beautiful example of industrial art of the early Italian Renaissance.

The two designs for dining-room chairs are put forth by the same Berlin firm, but it will be seen that they are by no means of equal merit. That on the right is good in every respect—sound in construction and

sensible in decoration. The other, while not wholly bad, presents many faults. Its most objectionable features are in the lower portion. The forelegs and rails are cumbersome and inelegant. We had fondly hoped that senseless "ornament" resembling nothing so much perhaps as inverted cups of assorted sizes had been given up for good by the furniture-maker; but here we have it again, and exploited too

in a publication (Schwende's "Decorative Furniture") especially designed for the use of the manufacturing trade. The bent legs of the back certainly do not add to the artistic beauty of the chair. We could also call attention to the misuse of the brass-headed nails studding the framework of the back. Below the seat such nails fasten the gimp and have a proper place; but here it is too evident that they fasten nothing. In the other chair they are introduced in the back less objectionably, for they might serve to hold the cushion in place.



JAPANESE LATTICE-SCREEN.

THE ART OF ILLUMINATION.*

I.

THERE can be little doubt that the art of illuminating manuscripts in gold, silver, and colors, and the processes employed on them, were of Eastern origin; indeed, the figures of the apostles, which generally precede the books of the gospels written by them, are Byzantine in character as late as the eleventh century, and are frequently accompanied by Greek inscriptions. The art was introduced into Rome in the second century; but it is to the centuries between the fifth and sixteenth that the true art of illumination belongs. It is an acknowledged fact that civilization and Christianity reigned long in Ireland before either was fully introduced into England; it is natural, therefore, that we should first look to Ireland for the art of illuminating, nor do we look in vain.

The most beautiful and wonderful of the Irish or Hibernian illuminations is the "Book of Kells," preserved in the Library of Trinity College, Dublin. This valuable manuscript was executed during the sixth century. Few persons can gaze upon its wondrous richness and intricate detail without astonishment.

The English illuminations which sprang from the Irish school may be best represented by the "Durham Book," the finest specimen of Anglo-Hibernian illumination in existence. This splendid MS. was illuminated on the Island of Lindisfarne, about the year 700.

In the illuminations of both the Irish and Anglo-Irish schools we find labored intricacy, with a decided want of repose and artistic simplicity. Natural flowers and foliage are almost entirely omitted in works of Celtic art. A style of illumination which arose about the fourth century was in full vigor during the eighth. Its principal peculiarity consists in the vellum on which the illuminations were executed; it being stained (or in latter times painted) with different shades of violet, purple, or rose; the illuminations and texts

* The series of illustrated articles of which this is the first (which will be continued in the magazine during the summer) is an abridgement, with alterations, of Henry Shaw's "Handbook of the Art of Illumination," a work not readily accessible to the general reader.